

הַנֶּהָ יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם יְהוָה וְכָרְתִי  
אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית

חֲדָשָׁה: אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵם בְּיוֹם הַחֲזִיקִי בְיָדְם לְהוֹצִיאֵם

מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר־הָמָּה הִפְרוּ

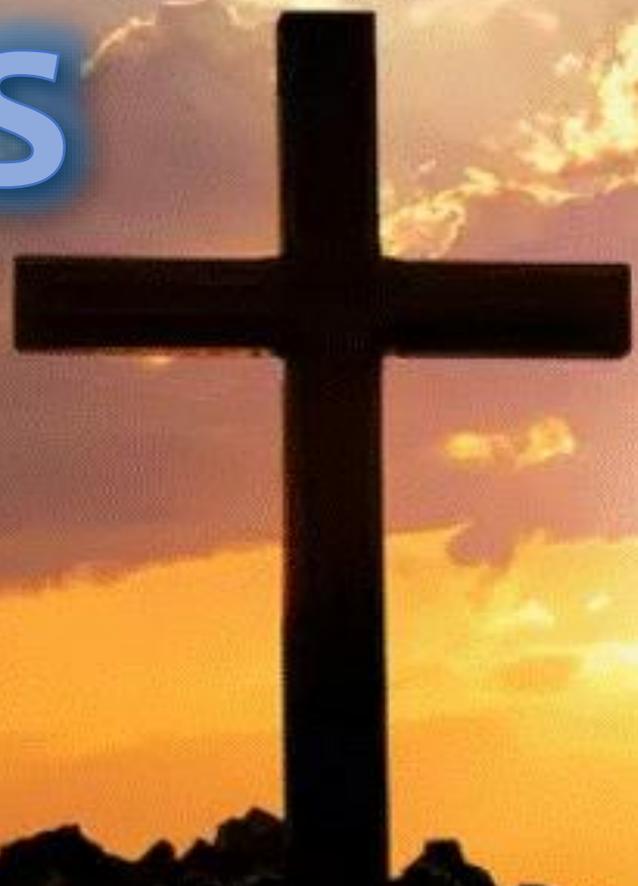
# The Book of Hebrews

יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרַי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם נְאֻם יְהוָה  
נָתַתִּי אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי בְּקֶרֶבְכֶם וְעַל־לִבְכֶם

אֶכְתָּבָנָה וְהֵייתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְהָמָּה  
יְהִיוּ־לִי לְעָם: וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד אִישׁ

אֶת־רַעְתּוֹ וְאִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו לֵאמֹר דַּעוּ  
אֶת־יְהוָה כִּי־כֹלָם יֵדְעוּ אוֹתִי לְמַקְטָנָם

וְעַד־גְּדוּלָם נְאֻם יְהוָה כִּי אֶסְלַח לְעוֹנֵם  
וְלִחַטָּאתָם לֹא אֶזְכֹּר־עוֹד: ס



# Outline of Hebrews

## “Jesus is Better”

- I. We Have a Final Revelation in Jesus (1:1-4)**
- II. Jesus Is Better Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)**
- III. Jesus Is Better Than Moses (3:1-4:13)**
  - A. The Faithful Son is Greater than the Servant Moses (3:1-6)**
  - B. The Argument from Psalm 95 (3:7-4:13)**
    - 1. The Text of Psalm 95 (3:7b-11)
    - 2. The Immediate Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)
    - 3. The Painful Example the OT Text Provides (3:16–19)
    - 4. The Prospect the Psalm Holds Out. (4:1-13)

# The Argument from Psalm 95 (3:7-4:13)

- In this section the author moves quite naturally from the **positive** examples of **Moses and Jesus** to the **negative** example of those **unfaithful Israelites** who, because of their disobedience, failed and died in the desert, never to enter the Promised Land.
- To change the direction of the discussion, the author uses Psalm 95:7b–11.
- The quotation of this Psalm is introduced with the phrase “*as the Holy Spirit says*” showing that the author believes that the admonition given in this Psalm is the divinely inspired Word of God.
- The Psalm itself begins with an exhortation: “*Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts...*”
- The author understands Psalm 95 to be an important warning for those who are in danger of drifting from the faith.

# The Text of Psalm 95 (3:7-11)

*7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup> where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’ <sup>11</sup> As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’” [Psalm 95:7b-11]*

# The Text of Psalm 95 (3:7-11)

*<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice ,<sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion*

- I believe the word “*therefore*” is making a connection at **two** levels:
- It’s making a connection with verse 6b (the previous verse).
  - <sup>6b</sup> *“And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you hear his voice ,<sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’”*
  - In one sense, there is merely a very simple straightforward ethical connection. Scripture tells us to **persevere**... not to give up, not to quit, not to harden our hearts.

# The Text of Psalm 95 (3:7-11)

*7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice , <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion*

- But at the same time, the word “*therefore*” is connecting to the ***bigger argument*** made in the entire preceding paragraph that ***Jesus is better***.
- In this connection, the author is saying something like:
  - “*Therefore* let me show you now from the theological reasoning found in the Old Testament text itself (Psalm 95), that Jesus really is better.”
- This argument runs all the way down to Heb 4:13, as we will eventually see.

# The Text of Psalm 95 (3:7-11)

<sup>7</sup> *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in **the rebellion**”*

- The time of “*the rebellion*”, of course, is referring to the events at Kadesh-Barnea, recorded in Numbers 13-14 (also Deut 9:23).
- When the people approached the Promised Land from the south for the first time and they sent in 12 spies and 10 of the 12 came back with a **negative** report.
- God had promised that he would open up the land for them. This was the God, after all, who had opened up the sea. It was the God who had provided the plagues.
- So this God, now, according to 10 of the spies, was not going to be able to handle a few giants? Seriously?

# The Text of Psalm 95 (3:7-11)

*<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice , <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in **the rebellion**”*

- But nevertheless, the people were so frightened and by the nasty report that, instead of trusting God, they trusted the judgment of the majority of the spies, and as a result, fell under God’s judgment.
- As Heb 3:19 will later tell us, the real problem here us **unbelief** – they didn’t believe what God had said.

# The Text of Psalm 95 (3:7-11)

*7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice ,<sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion...<sup>11</sup> As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter **my rest.**’”*

- There are **two** key ideas in this text:
  - “*Today*” in verse 7: “*Today, if you hear his voice...*”
  - The promise of entering “*my rest.*” (Verse 11)
- Those are the crucial words that the author is going to exegete for us in the following passages.
- So the author has read the text, and he’s asked, “Granted that this is the Word of God, what is the significance of “*today*”? What is the significance of “*They shall not enter my rest*”?”

# The Text of Psalm 95 (3:7-11)

<sup>7</sup> *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion... <sup>11</sup> As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’”*

- The author is doing his exegesis, and he wants to convince us that if we understand this passage from Psalm 95 **correctly**, which itself is referring to what God said at the time of Kadesh-Barnea (as recorded in Num 13-14), you are driven to some deep conclusions you mustn't miss.
- So that's the text of Psalm 95.
- He has not yet told us what he's going to **do** with these points, but I point them out now so that you will recognize them as they emerge in the remainder of the text.

# The Immediate Exhortation

## Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

<sup>12</sup> *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.* <sup>13</sup> *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* <sup>14</sup> *For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.* <sup>15</sup> *As it is said,*  
*“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” [Psalm 95:7b-8]*

# The Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

<sup>12</sup> *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.*

- There is a **deeper** theological argument that's coming up later, but before he gets there, the author takes this as a kind of immediate hortatory passage, a passage of exhortation – *“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart.”*
- In other words, there are some passages of Scripture that give you some warning or encouragement at a **moral** level, even while they're also saying something about the whole stream of thought in redemptive history.

# The Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

<sup>12</sup> *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.*

- After all, doesn't Paul say in 1 Corinthians 10:11 that **one** of the functions of the Old Testament narratives was for our warning, for our encouragement? It tells us what **not** to do and what **to** do.
- As preachers, I believe we have to be careful when doing expositions of an Old Testament that we don't **just** go through the text, and basically say, "This king was a good king; therefore, be good. This king was a bad king; therefore, don't be bad," and that's **all** we say!

# The Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

<sup>12</sup> *Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.*

- But before we become too critical of **only** making moral applications from an Old Testament text, it is important to recognize that making a moral application **is** a useful thing to do.
- It may not be the **only** thing to say about the text, but it is a **useful** thing to say, and it's the **first** thing the author says here: “Before we get into the deeper points of ‘*today*’ and the ‘*my rest*’ and what’s going on, this is a **moral** exhortation. Pay attention!”

# The Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

<sup>13</sup> *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “**today**,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* <sup>14</sup> *For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

- In that sense, the “**today**” given in verse 13 can be taken at face value: Well, it’s **today**, and there’s a danger of falling aside. Don’t fall aside **today**, as long as it’s today, which goes on for quite a long time. As long as it’s **today**, don’t harden your heart so “*that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*” <sup>1</sup>
- Falling away from God can be **prevented**, the author tells us, if believers “*exhort one another every day*”.<sup>2</sup>
- The author will tell us later (Heb 10:25) that believers should regularly gather together to strengthen and encourage one another. <sup>2</sup>
- **Occasional** encouragement does not suffice – Encouragement is needed “*every day*”.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DA Carson – *Jesus is Better – Six Studies in Hebrews* (2002)

<sup>2</sup> Schreiner, Thomas R. – *Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary - Hebrews*; p. 127

# The Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

<sup>13</sup> *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* <sup>14</sup> *For we have come to share in Christ, **if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.***

- But there is a theological point to the author’s emphasis on the importance of continuing to persevere. It is found in verse 14.
- Basically what verse 14 does is give us a definition of what valid faith looks like: valid faith, **by definition**, perseveres – “*we have come to share in Christ, **if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.***”

# The Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

<sup>13</sup> *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* <sup>14</sup> *For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

- This idea of Christian perseverance is a fairly common thought in the New Testament.
- For example, some people approach Jesus and they’re called his “*disciples*”, nevertheless, Jesus can turn to them later and say in John 8:31 – “*If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.*”
- This same idea has already, in principle, been said in a briefer form earlier in the book of Hebrews (Heb 3:6b) – “*And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*”

# The Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

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- The idea of Christian perseverance is also found, for example, in some of the **Apostle Paul’s** writings:
  - Rom 11:22 – *Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, **provided you continue** in his kindness...*
  - Col 1:22-23 – *He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, **if indeed you continue** in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard...*

# The Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

<sup>13</sup> *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* <sup>14</sup> *For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

- Or you may remember how we read in 1 John that certain people had abandoned the church, and John says concerning them:
  - 1 John 2:19 – *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*

# The Exhortation Psalm 95 Offers (3:12–15)

<sup>13</sup> *But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.* <sup>14</sup> *For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

- We’ll struggle with some more of these kinds of passages later when we look at the first of the ***apostasy*** passages in Hebrews 6, for example.
- But before you read Hebrews 6, you’re supposed to read Hebrews 3.
- So it’s important to get Heb 3:6b and Heb 3:14 under your belt before you get to Heb 6:4-6 and have a heart attack!

# The Painful Example the OT Text Provides (3:16–19)

<sup>16</sup> *For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? <sup>17</sup> And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? <sup>18</sup> And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? <sup>19</sup> So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.*

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- The author asks a series of rhetorical questions here, and the point he is making is that the very same people who escaped slavery by the miraculous hand of God, never entered the Promised Land, the very same people!
- What he is doing is setting us up for a view of conversion that is a little more complex than some of us are used to where you might actually be given the grace to **escape** something and not yet have the grace to **enter** something, because that's what happened already in the Old Testament.

# The Painful Example the OT Text Provides (3:16–19)

<sup>19</sup> *So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.*

- By the miraculous, spectacular power of God, these people came out under Moses' leadership. They constituted the covenant people of God, and they were freed from slavery.
- At Sinai they **vowed** they would **keep** the covenant (Exodus 19:8), admittedly there were some slippages here and there like the Golden Calf episode (Ex 32:1ff), but eventually they did **vow** they would **keep** the covenant (Ex 24:9), did they not?
- But then when they come up to the Promised Land, because of "*unbelief*" they don't go in.
- The obvious warning here is that if the readers of this letter, after having received an even better message, turn away in unbelief, they will not enter into God's eternal rest.

# Class Discussion Time



# \*Class Discussion Time

- The conditional texts that we have looked at (Heb 3:6b and 3:14) make one thing clear: Human perspective on the status of another person before God is limited. The author of Hebrews, Paul, you, and I—every human being—have limitations on what we can know about the spiritual condition of another person, and to some degree, we are dependent on an outward manifestation of spiritual realities (cf. Matt. 7:15–23; James 2:14–26).
- The author of Hebrews cannot give unqualified assurance to those drifting away from God that they indeed have a part in God's house or are sharers in Christ. He addresses them collectively as believers, but realizes that some in the group may manifest a different reality as time goes on (cf. 1 John 2:19). Perseverance does not **cause** salvation but demonstrates the reality that true salvation indeed **has happened**. If the end comes and a person is not in relationship with Christ, it means that the person had never truly become Christ's companion.
- Do you find this sobering? Does it cause you to sometimes worry about your own state before God? Have you ever known a person who, at one point seemed to make a strong profession of faith, only to later walk away from the faith?

## \*Class Discussion Time

- In 3:13 the author prompts us to “*encourage one another daily.*” (NIV)
- In other words, the give and take of positive encouragement from others in the body of Christ provides a **safeguard** against heart-hardening sin and spiritual bankruptcy.
  - *On March 10, 1904, the great escape artist Houdini was challenged to a contest by The Illustrated Mirror of London. The paper dared the showman to escape from a complex form of handcuffs with six locks on each cuff and nine tumblers on each lock. The performer took the challenge with thousands gathered at the London Hippodrome to see if he could escape these new bonds. Having been handcuffed securely, Houdini ducked down into a box to struggle out of sight of the crowd. After about twenty minutes the entertainer popped up out of the box; the gathering roared their approval but suddenly quieted as they realized the cuffs were still in place.*

## **\*Class Discussion Time**

– *Houdini smiled, asked for more light, and went back into the box. Fifteen minutes passed, and once again the escape artist appeared. Again the crowd cheered enthusiastically. Houdini smiled, saying that he just needed to flex his knees. Down he went. After about twenty minutes he came up again, taking a pocketknife from his vest and holding it in his teeth. Houdini slashed his coat to ribbons, freeing himself of the hot and heavy garment, and then jumped back into the box. The crowd cheered him on. This time he only stayed in the box for ten minutes and then emerged a free man holding the cuffs in his hands. The crowd gave an extended ovation for the master of escape. Later a reporter asked Houdini why he kept popping up out of the box when he was not yet free. He replied that he needed to hear the encouragement of the crowd.*

## \*Class Discussion Time

- Those of us who live in Christian community struggle, often alone, against discouragement as a result of sin, conflict with culture, physical fatigue, relationship problems, etc.
- When we come out of our solitude into the light of Christian fellowship, we need to experience applause and **encouragement** from others in the body of Christ. This gives us the courage to go back to our struggles with new energy and hope. From a human point of view such affirmation can make all the difference in holding “firmly till the end” the confidence that began our Christian commitment.
- Can you give a tangible example of a time that the Christian community gave you much needed encouragement? Or perhaps a time when you were able to **give** a fellow believer encouragement?